

HALTON REGION PUBLIC HEALTH • Office of the Medical Officer of Health

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TO: Halton Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments, other Healthcare Providers

FROM: Dr. Joanna Oda, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: March 26, 2024

RE: Ongoing Increased Risk of Measles in Halton - Measles Information and Updates

QUICK FACTS

- There has been an increased number of measles outbreaks occurring globally and a number of confirmed cases have been reported in [Canada](#). In Ontario, there have been 9 confirmed cases of measles between January 1, 2024 to March 25, 2024 (7 were travel related and 2 with unknown source).
- While there have been no confirmed cases of measles in Halton, Halton Region Public Health investigated 49 individuals who were contacts of confirmed measles cases between January 2024 and March 2024.
- A number of new resources are available to assist healthcare providers prepare for a case of measles and are summarized below. Highlights include:
 - The Ontario College of Family Physicians has developed a [Measles resource](#) to support primary care providers.
 - To facilitate timely testing, immediately report all suspect or confirmed cases of measles infection to Halton Region Public Health by calling 311 or 905-825-6000. Do not wait for laboratory confirmation.
 - Help prevent community spread by ensuring that children who may have missed dose(s) of measles-containing vaccine during the pandemic years are brought up to date as soon as possible.
 - Health care workers without documentation of proof of immunity, regardless of age of birth, will be excluded from work if deemed to be exposed to a confirmed measles case. Ensure all staff in your office/clinic have documentation of either two doses of measles-containing vaccine OR laboratory evidence of immunity.

KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- Health care providers should include measles in their differential diagnoses, particularly in returning travelers with compatible symptoms including: Fever, Cough, coryza or conjunctivitis and generalized maculopapular rash.
- **If you suspect measles infection in a patient:**
 1. Try to assess the patient at the end of day in a single room with the door closed if an airborne infection isolation room is not available to promptly isolate the patient.
 2. Provide the patient with a medical mask if able to tolerate use.
 3. After patient assessment, do not use the exam room until at least two hours have elapsed.
 4. Only health care workers with presumptive immunity to measles should provide care to patients with suspect/confirmed measles.
 5. All health care workers should wear a fit-tested, seal-checked N95 respirator when entering the room and/or providing care for a patient with suspect/confirmed measles. Refer to [PHO's Interim IPAC Recommendations](#) for details. N95 masks are available for healthcare providers and can be ordered

from the [PPE Supply Portal](#). More details on ordering from the PPE Supply Portal can be found in our [September 23, 2023 Advisory](#).

6. Do not wait for lab confirmation. Immediately report any suspected or confirmed measles cases to Halton Region Public Health by calling **311 or 905-825- 6000**. Call Halton Region Public Health to facilitate the transport of specimens to the Public Health Ontario (PHO) laboratory in Toronto for timely testing.
 7. Advise the patient to self-isolate.
 8. Note: If you are referring a patient for further assessment or diagnostic testing, the receiving facility must be notified ahead of the patient's arrival to allow IPAC measures to be implemented.
- **Diagnostic Testing:**
 - PCR specimens are essential for diagnostic testing. If feasible, collect **ALL** of the following:
 - Nasopharyngeal swab (within 7 days of rash onset) **AND**
 - Throat swab (within seven days of rash onset) **AND**
 - Urine (within 14 days of rash onset)
 - For suspect cases with a high index of suspicion, it may be warranted to test beyond the time periods noted above. Refer to [PHO Measles-Diagnostic-PCR](#) for further guidance.
 - Serology testing (within 7 days of rash onset) alone is unreliable for diagnosis. Refer to [PHO Measles-Serology](#) for details.
 - Clearly mark "Suspect case of measles" and STAT on each [laboratory requisition](#) for PCR or diagnostic serology. Complete all fields of the laboratory requisition form. Refer to [PHO Measles-Diagnostic-PCR](#) and [PHO Temporary Priority Measles Submission Guidelines](#) for information required for testing.
 - All requisitions for testing should have checked off the "diagnosis" box and contain the following information: patient symptoms and onset date, exposure, travel and vaccination history.
 - Ensure your office has testing specimen containers/supplies available. Review expiry dates of supplies. Swabs are currently being distributed with vaccine orders
 - To order additional specimen collection supplies, use PHO's [Requisition for Specimen Containers and Supplies](#). See [PHO Kit and Test Ordering Instructions](#) for more information.
 - **Measles Immunization**
 1. All Ontarians are eligible for **one or two publicly funded doses** of measles-containing vaccine depending on age and risk factors. Refer to the [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule for Ontario](#) for details on routine, high-risk and catch-up schedules.
 2. Ensure children who may have missed dose(s) of measles-containing vaccine during the pandemic years are brought up to date as soon as possible
 3. If immunization records are unavailable, immunization with measles-containing vaccine is preferred over serology. Refer to [PHO Measles-Serology](#) for details. Serology is not recommended before or after receiving MMR. If serology is inadvertently done, and the patient does not demonstrate immunity but has the required number of doses, re-immunization is not necessary.
 4. Travellers to destinations outside of Canada or locations experiencing outbreaks should ensure they are adequately immunized against measles prior to travel. Refer to [Canadian Immunization Guide](#) for recommendations.
 5. Orders for MMR vaccines, are starting to be filled with Priorix®. GSK has changed their packaging for this product. The diluent now comes in a prefilled syringe. Refer to the [product monograph](#) for instructions on how to reconstitute.
 6. The new package size for Priorix® is significantly larger (3.05cm x 17.78cm x 13.97 cm). Please keep this in mind when ordering to ensure your vaccine fridge can safely store quantities ordered.
 7. Vaccines can be ordered from Halton Region Public Health through the online [Vaccine Order Form](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Testing indications for measles, Public Health Ontario, September 26, 2023](#)

[Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario June 2022, Ontario](#)

[Measles vaccine: Canadian Immunization Guide, Government of Canada, October 31, 2023](#)

[Measles, Ontario College of Family Physicians, March 18, 2024](#)

[Measles: Information for Health Care Providers, Public Health Ontario, 2nd Edition, March 15, 2024](#)